



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

2023-25 STATE BUDGET ISSUE BRIEF

BUDGETS FROM A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

For Catholics, every public policy should be measured by how it affects the life and dignity of the human person, especially the needs of those living in poverty, those who are on the margins, and those who suffer the injustice of racism. Catholic teaching holds that every member of the human family must be respected from conception until natural death and have the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in the life of the community.

Whether the priorities listed below are taken up in the budget or in separate legislation, we urge Wisconsin lawmakers to advance them to protect life and promote the common good.

WOMEN, CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Every human life is sacred and deserves protection. Following the repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, it is even more imperative that no woman is made to feel that abortion is the best solution to her situation. A society that truly respects human life must take active measures to ensure that pro-woman, pro-child, and pro-family policies are enacted into law.

- Extend the postpartum eligibility for women in the Medicaid program to 12 months.
- Expand the Family Foundations Home Visiting Program.
- Provide grants to reduce infant and maternal mortality which will help to address racial disparities.
- Create a sales tax exemption for diapers, breastfeeding equipment, and feminine hygiene products.
- Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for families with one and two children.
- Support affordable childcare and sustain childcare providers.
- Create a tax credit for qualified adoption expenses.
- Support housing and wraparound services for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- Eliminate fiscal cliffs and marriage penalties in state assistance programs.

EDUCATION

Education is the surest path to full participation in the social, economic, and political life of our nation. Parents are the primary educators of their children. As such, they have the right to send their children to the school of their choice, whether public, private, religious, or homeschool. Wisconsin must sustain its public commitment to all these elementary and secondary schools and expand parental choice options so all parents can choose the schools that best meet their children's needs.

- Provide commensurate funding for public schools and private parental choice programs.
- Expand mental health services in public schools.
- Create private school health and safety grants.
- Increase special education funding.
- Offer resident tuition for undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients.

HOUSING

Shelter is a basic human right. Wisconsin must ensure that all its residents have access to safe and affordable housing, which promotes family cohesion, student achievement, steady employment, and better health.

- Increase the supply of affordable housing and workforce housing.
- Implement the recommendations of the Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- Increase the Homestead Tax Credit.

HEALTH CARE

Health care is a basic human right. Wisconsin must provide its uninsured and underinsured residents with access to affordable and quality health care, including mental health care.

- Extend Medicaid (BadgerCare) to residents who earn up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Provide a tax credit for family caregivers of adults in need of daily assistance.
- Increase funding for mental health and substance use treatment.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Criminal justice not only protects and restores public order, but also serves to rehabilitate the individual. Wisconsin's criminal justice system must ensure that victims of crime, including the community at large, also have opportunities to be healed and restored. Corrections policies must make special efforts to reintegrate those previously incarcerated into society.

- Return all 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system.
- Increase funding for Treatment Alternatives and Diversion (TAD) programs.
- Expand the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) program.
- Implement the recommendations of the Legislative Council Study Committee on Increasing Offender Employment Opportunities.

TRANSPORTATION

Safe and reliable transportation is vital to individual well-being, public order, and economic development. Every Wisconsin resident should have the ability to go to work, school, worship, secure household necessities, and participate fully in community life.

- Increase transportation assistance for elders and individuals with disabilities.
- Strengthen public transportation to meet the needs of all residents, rural and urban.
- Offer noncompliant REAL ID driver's licenses or identification cards to undocumented individuals.

CARE FOR CREATION

The earth has been entrusted to us. Our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply for our own benefit. Our stewardship of the earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must also be guided by a concern for generations to come.

- Replace lead service lines, repair or replace contaminated wells and aging septic systems, and cleanup PFAS contamination.
- Expand rural broadband.
- Assist new family and minority farmers.
- Support local food processing grants.
- Fund the Hunger Task Force's Badger State Box food program.

Please contact your legislators to support these positions and contact us with any questions. To contact your representatives, visit the Wisconsin State Legislature website at legis.wisconsin.gov and use the *Find Your Legislator* tool, or call the State Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472.



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106 E. Doty Street • Suite 300 • Madison, WI 53703 • 608-257-0004
office@wisconsincatholic.org • wisconsincatholic.org